

**Carlisle School Committee**  
Minutes  
January 16, 2008  
Clark Room, Carlisle Town Hall  
7:00 PM

Present – School Committee: Nicole Burkel, Chair; Dale Ryder; Michael Fitzgerald, Chad Koski.

Present – School Administration: Marie Doyle, Superintendent; Jim Halliday, Principal; Patrice Hurley, Principal; Karen Slack, Director of Student Support Services; Claire Wilcox, Assistant to the Superintendent, David Flannery, Director of Buildings and Grounds.

**Nicole Burkel called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.**

### **Public Comment Period**

Ms. Burkel welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked if any members of the public had comments.

Tom Doucette of Ember Lane commented on a concern regarding the school budget and the value of his home and the education his children receive.

### **Review of minutes**

**Dale Ryder made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 2, 2008. Chad Koski seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the minutes.**

### **Communications/Correspondence**

The following items were reviewed:

- Thank you note from Margaret Heigl
- Letter from the Carlisle ADA Task Force approving reimbursement for the Brick Building handicap ramp
- Thank you letter from Marie Doyle to the PE/Health teachers
- Principal Brochure

### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Marie Doyle reported on the following:

- Principal Search
- Staff Meeting regarding the budget
- STEP program
- CSA Parent coffee next week on MCAS
- Meeting with Board of Selectmen on February 26th

## **Administrator Reports**

Elementary Principal Patrice Hurley represented the Administrative Team and reported on the following:

- School Advisory Council Community Outreach
- CPAC meeting
- District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)
- Mentoring Program
- ELA Curriculum Review
- Junior District Music Auditions
- Tony Vaca Cultural Enrichment Program

Ms. Burkel asked the teachers and administrators present in the audience to introduce themselves.

## **Members'/Committee Reports**

Mr. Fitzgerald reported on the retirement of the regional school district superintendent, Brenda Finn, who announced her retirement at the most recent regional school committee meeting. Mr. Fitzgerald also reported that the Carlisle share of the regional budget is about \$250,000 over the Finance Committee guidelines. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the committee has been developing a plan for the high school to come into compliance with requirements regarding the length of the school year. It is likely that the school day will be extended by 15 minutes each day, with the day beginning earlier.

Ms. Doyle reported on the MSBA process. A meeting has been scheduled for January 30<sup>th</sup> between the MSBA and several town officials to discuss the next steps in the process.

Ms. Ryder reported on a meeting with the Long Term Capital Requirements Committee, which she and Ms. Doyle attended. Ms. Doyle updated members on the technology replacement/upgrade process and the discussions held with the committee.

## **Information/Discussion Items**

- A. **Consultant process update.** Ms. Burkel reported that facilitator John Littleford met individually with thirty-six members of the school community: teachers selected by the CTA leadership, staff, administrators, and school committee members. The follow-up workshop for all participants was postponed because of

a snowstorm and will be held on January 27<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting Mr. Littleford will present several recommendations, and subcommittees will be set up to go forward. He will also present a written set of recommendations.

- B. Elementary World Language Presentation.** Ms. Burkel introduced, Andrea Seddon, who discussed the elementary world language program. She discussed the assessment process, which is performance based for the younger children. She stated that the elementary students are very open to learning and using Spanish. Ms. Seddon stated that the study of English has been enhanced by the students' learning a second language. They have become adept at comparing Spanish and English words.

Ms. Seddon showed a short film she has made of her students. The video demonstrated many of the techniques she uses in her teaching. She also reviewed the importance of learning a second language at a young age, citing research that has been done regarding the way children learn language compared with adults.

Ms. Ryder asked whether Ms. Seddon feels that it is enough to have 45 minutes of language once a week. Ms. Seddon responded that it is very valuable, and that the children are getting a lot out of the one period of Spanish a week. The program has given the students a love for learning language and an enthusiasm for Spanish. Ms. Ryder asked if any assessment was done at the end of the year. Ms. Seddon responded by comparing where her first graders are this year in their study as compared with last year. They are definitely retaining what they have learned.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the transition to Middle School language has been easier because of the elementary program. Ms. Seddon stated that this is difficult to determine because there has been only one year for this transition. Mr. Fitzgerald further asked if the program has influenced students to select Spanish in the Middle School. This year more students selected French than Spanish.

Ms. Doyle stated that the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has been working on a position paper stating that all schools should teach elementary world language and global education.

- C. English Language Arts Presentation.** Steve Bober and Sue LaPorte discussed the English language arts (ELA) curriculum. Ms. Laporte gave a brief overview of their work. A very large piece of their work, especially for Ms. Laporte is early intervention. They work with both groups of students and individuals. They do reading and writing workshops. One of their responsibilities is to select curriculum materials, and to attend EDCO meetings with neighboring towns. A focus has been on vertical articulation of the curriculum, particularly with the writing program. She described a team day held with representatives from each grade level to discuss the writing process from grades K-8. She and

Mr. Laporte then summarized some highlights this year for each grade level. These include:

- Kindergarten assessment evaluation
- Kindergarten poetry unit development
- DIBELS implementation in first grade
- First grade poetry unit
- Second grade reading assessment
- Third grade reading instructional strategies using the reading pyramid
- Open response questions added to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum
- Fourth grade focus on better preparation for MCAS through additional practice with writing samples from MCAS
- Fifth grade new core literature
- Middle School aligning and articulating poetry and short story elements to be taught at each grade level

Mr. Bober discussed the ELA curriculum review process. He distributed a document outlining the process to be followed. The team consists of parents, administrators, and teachers. There will be 3 phases to the review process: audit, review, and recommendations. These 3 phases will be carried out for all aspects of the program: instructional writing, instructional reading, and speaking and listening.

Mr. Koski asked about alignment of our program with that of the high school. Mr. Bober stated that this would be part of the curriculum review process. He further stated that last year there was a great deal of interaction between our 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA teacher and the high school.

Ms. Burkel asked if we compared benchmarks with Concord. Ms. Laporte stated that we have not, but that both our benchmarks and Concord's are based on the state guidelines.

Ms. Ryder asked how quickly the changes discussed are put into practice in the classroom. Mr. Bober responded that team meeting changes have had an immediate effect. He also responded that he hopes that the curriculum review will have a long-lasting affect, but this has not always happened with curriculum reviews in the past.

**D. Level Funded Budget.** Ms. Doyle began the presentation by thanking the large group of citizens present at the meeting. She also thanked the town of Carlisle for the support they have given to the school throughout the budget process. She defined level service and level funded budgets.

She then began her slide presentation by reviewing the mission, vision, and core values for the Carlisle Public Schools. She then reviewed the District Goals for the year and the major accomplishments of the school in order to frame the budget. She discussed our academic achievement based on MCAS results,

current initiatives underway, class size recommendations, and the Carlisle education model.

She then broke down the way the school spends budgeted funds and compared Carlisle with other similar districts. She reviewed the responsibilities of the administrative team and compared the size of schools in Concord and Carlisle and the number of principals.

Ms. Doyle reviewed the budget drivers, and the full time equivalent staff this year and proposed for next year under the level funded budget. She showed a breakdown of the salary increases that are driving up the budget and then presented the level services budget, which is \$605,112 above the Finance Committee recommendations. She went through each line of the budget and noted areas of increase.

Ms. Doyle then presented a set of reductions to close the \$605,112 shortfall. The reductions have been prioritized in tiers, and if additional funds are appropriated, the cuts will be reinstated in order beginning with the first tier. She discussed other potential sources of funds, and showed the fees that we currently charge and compared them with those of other similar towns.

She finished her presentation by summarizing the impact of a level funded budget including larger class sizes, less academic support for students, less technology support for classes, less curriculum support for teachers, less staff development, interruption of ELA vertical articulation, and fewer supplies.

Ms. Burkel thanked Ms. Doyle and opened up the discussion to School Committee members. Ms. Ryder raised a concern with the fact that a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher would have to teach outside of his or her subject area if a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher is cut. Ms. Doyle responded that this is not the most desirable situation, but it can be done and has been done in the past.

Mr. Koski asked a question about the permanent substitute line and how the substitutes would be covered if a permanent sub is cut. Ms. Doyle responded that this would be covered by daily substitutes.

Ms. Ryder asked how many children are currently in the ELL program, and Ms. Slack responded that there are 14 to 16 students.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked for clarification regarding the ELL program, and Ms. Slack explained that students have been identified who need services and other students have moved to Carlisle.

Ms. Ryder asked how many psychologists the school has. Ms. Slack responded that there are 3 full time equivalents: pre-k – 2, grades 3-5, and grades 6-8. In response to a question from Ms. Burkel, Ms. Slack described the responsibilities

of the psychologists, who also function as guidance counselors and stated that these are all very busy.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked about CEF support for the elementary world language program and asked if the CEF or CSA might support any of the programs potentially being cut. He further stated that we should be doing everything we can to preserve the elementary world language program.

Ms. Burkel thanked the large audience present at the meeting. She also thanked Claire Wilcox, Susan Pray, and Ms. Doyle, who have worked very hard on the budget especially in the absence of Ms. Zimmerman.

Ms. Burkel then opened the meeting to public comments.

Hunter Hutchinson asked about class sizes if a kindergarten teacher is cut and about how difficult it would be to add a kindergarten teacher in the future if there is a larger cohort of students.

Ginny Lamere expressed a concern about losing the position of technology integration coordinator. Ms. Doyle explained that technology would be reorganized and that the school librarian would take on the media function in addition to the library function.

Mary Beth Stevenson stated that the presentation was excellent. She said that she is concerned with the staff cuts and the supply cuts. As a town we need to rally behind the school to keep our high quality school. She asked if there is any chance that the Finance Committee would recommend an override to the voters. Ms. Burkel stated that the development of the budget is a process, and that overrides are not yet known. Mr. Fitzgerald added that it is likely that the School Committee will ask for an override. Thornton Ash of the Finance Committee stated that right now the FinCom is looking only at a level funded budget. The second part of the process would be to meet with any town boards that would like to request an override.

Vera Tice thanked Ms. Doyle and all those who helped put together the budget. She expressed a concern with the performance of the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade class on the MCAS test last year and the fact that this is the class that might have a teacher cut for next year.

Heidi Harring asked whether there might be money available through grants, and whether anyone in the administration is writing grants. Ms. Doyle responded that this is normally a function of an assistant superintendent. She also stated that we are not eligible for many grants because of our socio-economic status. We are participating in a grant for the STEP/STEM programming.

Alex Krapf stated that he is concerned about using grants to support programs like elementary world language and technology. We then have to support those programs and equipment once the grant is no longer available. He further stated a concern with the large increase in the salary line.

Mr. Krapf stated that he has seen costs on a website that showed our special education costs to be much higher than other districts. He suggested that there should be a discussion of school choice as a way to maintain four sections at each grade level.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the School Committee had discussed choice and that there are many concerns with the program. Ms. Doyle stated that she had discussed this with other area superintendents and that none of those consulted recommend the choice program. There is little control over the students who come into the school, and we would then be responsible for them for eight years.

Mr. Krapf noted a concern that supplies are being cut but the school is contemplating adding significant investments in technology. He is also opposed to adding additional fee-based after school programs but would like to see other opportunities for athletic participation besides varsity and JV teams.

Bill Fink asked if the declining enrollment is reflected in the level service budget. Ms. Doyle stated that this is spread across several grades so it is difficult to reflect this. He stated that in Carlisle we expect something that is more like a private school with public spending, and this is getting harder and harder to achieve. He stated that he believes funding by the families that have children in the school might be the way to go and suggested that bus fees might be extended to more students. Ms. Burkel stated that this might be possible. Mr. Fitzgerald said that we should not do this, as our students can't walk to school since there are no sidewalks. He further stated that we do not really have a private school model and that our class sizes are not as small as those in private schools. He also stated that our program is comparable to Concord and other similar communities. The problem is that the tax base is entirely residential compared with many surrounding towns. Ms. Ryder stated that she agreed with Mr. Fink that the parents should take more responsibility for funding the school. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that there would then be a danger of having a two-tiered school.

Marty Blue stated that she is concerned with the possibility of losing a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and that there is not really time to fully assess the effect of this on the students. She is very concerned about this possibility. She further asked how our number of school psychologists compares with that of other schools. She asked why there are fees for certain activities and not others.

Alex Krapf again expressed a concern with additional and higher fees.

Ms. Burkel asked Ms. Doyle to look at how our psychologist numbers compare with other schools and if there might be additional contracted services required if we had fewer psychologists.

Kelly Driscoll suggested looking at the whole picture of the administrative team compared with that of other schools. Ms. Doyle reviewed the administrative staffing in Concord compared with Carlisle and stated that we have a smaller team and the members of the team have more responsibilities.

Heidi Haring asked about the trending of our MCAS scores over the past 5 years. Ms. Doyle stated that the School Committee MCAS presentation is on the web.

Louis Salemy asked if the School Committee had done any long-range planning regarding the budget situation. Ms. Burkel stated that the School Committee had talked about doing a 3-year forecast. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the town had formed a long-term financial planning committee, and the members presented a report to town meeting last year.

Ms. Burkel thanked those who spoke for their comments and asked that they come to meetings with the Finance Committee on January 23rd and Board of Selectmen on February 26th.

## **Adjournment**

There was no additional business, and **Mr. Koski made a motion to adjourn the meeting and enter executive session to discuss a contract issue. Ms. Ryder seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor: Ms. Burkel, yes; Mr. Fitzgerald, yes; Mr. Koski, yes; Ms. Ryder, yes.**

The public meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire M. Wilcox  
Assistant to the Superintendent